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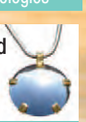

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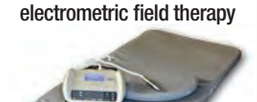

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The Heart of the Matter

The journey from unconsciousness to consciousness seems long. You can rest there awhile, but please don't get stranded no matter how seductive "knowing" can be. Keep on the path that leads from your mind to the heart and to your your soul.

The heart is related to the deeper truths of our being, how we live, why we love and why we exist. There are many aspects to the heart – courage, compassion, health, wisdom, charity, service, kindness, inspiration, empowerment and finally, love. Much can nourish the heart and fortify our spirits. For instance, which language of love do you hold most meaningful? What is most precious to others who you share your life with? A joyous heart is indeed our compass to wellbeing and success.

May you find the words in this issue useful on your journey. And please know that you are not alone. We all flourish in love and grow towards the fullness of our selves by giving and receiving heartfelt gratitude. May this magazine you hold in your unique hands stimulate your mind and touch your heart. Our team at *Common Ground* realizes that we are all traveling on this long journey with you.

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Biomimicry

you can't beat Mother Nature

by Bruce Mason

Do, or die. At COP 21*, humanity turned a corner and agreed upon a coordinated, if somewhat symbolic, attempt to save itself. Not only did it signal the end of the fossil fuel era, but more importantly, we began to rethink our assumed and abusive role in nature. We accepted we must begin again or become extinct in the human-caused Anthropocene Age – the apocalypse of *Homo sapiens*, now underway. A wise quote on beginning is most often attributed to Goethe: "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back… Whatever you can do or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

For the committed – now looking to nature for solutions and sustainability, rather than more quick and dirty profit – there is "biomimicry," which is defined as science that studies nature's models for imitation and inspiration to solve human problems.

After millions of years of tinkering, Mother Nature has worked out effective processes, eliminated waste and boosted efficiency. She has also inspired us: Leonardo da Vinci obsessed over birds in his dreams of flight and the Wright brothers carefully studied photographs of pigeons, seagulls and pelicans to help realize the primordial dream.

The following examples exemplify how biomimicry has evolved in leaps and bounds. Velcro was conceived of and invented by a Swiss engineer while removing burrs from his dog. The nose of the shinkansen trains – among the fastest trains in the world along with France's TGV and German's ICE – was streamlined along the lines of the kingfisher's beak. Spiderweb silk – as strong as Kevlar in bulletproof vests – is being re-engineered for parachute lines, suspension bridge cables and artificial ligaments. Sharkskin-like surfaces move more efficiently under water. Self-sharpening teeth of many animals are copied for improved cutting tools. Solar cells have been improved, taking cues from leaves and sunflowers. Water is being harvested from fog, emulating beetles, in nets being used in 22 countries. New ceramics imitate seashells. Polar bear fur is mimicked in thermal collectors and clothing. Self-healing materials, polymers and composites mend cracks, based on biology. Bumps – like the front edge of whale fins – reduce drag and increase lift of wind turbines, fans, aircraft wings and propellers.

Biomimicry isn't far-out, far-fetched or far away. Technology has just been developed at SFU which copies the sophisticated structure of a South American morpho butterfly wing to create a visual image, virtually impossible to counterfeit. A University of Calgary team just earned first place in the student category of the Biomimicry Global Design Challenge to find solutions from nature to improve the global food system. Their invention, the "Windchill" refrigerator, is a cheap, portable way to cool food without grid electricity. Taking clues from kangaroos, elephants, bees and termites, their design is welcome in a world that wastes half of its food, especially in rural areas, including Africa, where 70 percent of the population has no access to "old" electricity.

Even as COP 21 was convening, engineers at Stanford made a breakthrough in artificial photosynthesis. They're striving to convert greenhouse gases into fuel. Plants utilize the Sun's energy to combine water and carbon dioxide to create sugar, the fuel upon which they live. Now, new, powerful, non-corrosive underwater solar cells have the capacity to combine water with captured carbon dioxide to make fuels for humans.

As 2016 dawned, scientists made progress on artificial "trees" to capture excess carbon and either store it or convert it into fuel, a great hope in climate change action.

And that's just a tip of the possibilities in the Biomimicry iceberg, especially as we re-imagine a visionary new perspective.

Ford is investigating Russian dandelion sap as a substitute for rubber, while introducing soy foam seating, wheat straw storage bins and replacing fibreglass with composite cellulose. On their shopping list: tomato waste (Heinz), strong and light enough to replace talc as a reinforcement for plastic, fast growing algae, bamboo, oat hulls and Canadian mustard seed.

Motivated by the astonishing success of a first few steps, Ford is also focusing on gecko toe pads. They enable the 2.5-ounce creature to support 293 pounds, stick to most surfaces without liquids or tension and easily release, leaving no residue.

Motivated by the astonishing success of a first few steps, Ford is also focusing on gecko toe pads. They enable the 2.5-ounce creature to support 293 pounds, stick to most surfaces without liquids or tension and easily release, leaving no residue. Plastics and other materials, currently glued together, can't be broken down for recycling. The next-generation adhesives will not only provide strong bonds, but their components will be easily separated for recycling, bypassing landfills and incinerators.

Nature offers an unlimited variety of untapped solutions. Whether or not we humans prevail, she'll get by without us. In the meantime, we're witnessing the "genius, power and magic" of biomimicry.

Please send Clean Tech tips to brucemason@shaw.ca

*The 21st annual Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Paris, late 2015.

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of **Our Clinic**.

Happy healthy hearts

by Gary Chapman

Understanding the Five Love Languages

photo © Monkey Business Images Ltd

After 30 years as a marriage counsellor, I am convinced there are five basic love languages – five ways to express love emotionally. Each person has a primary love language that we must learn to speak if we want that person to feel loved.

Words of affirmation

One time when my wife and I were visiting our daughter and son-in-law and our two grandchildren, our son-in-law took the garbage out after dinner. When he walked back into the room where we were talking with our daughter, she looked up and said, "John, thanks for taking the garbage out."

Inside I said, "Yes!" because I knew the power of appreciation. I can't tell you how many men and women have sat in my office over the past 30 years and said to me, "I work my tail off every day yet my spouse acts like I haven't done a thing. I never get a single word of appreciation." If your spouse's primary love language is words of affirmation, your spoken praise and appreciation will fall like rain on parched soil. Before long, you will see new life sprouting in your marriage as your spouse responds to your words of love.

Acts of service

Do you remember the old saying, "Actions speak louder than words?" For some people, that is particularly true of love. If acts of service is your spouse's primary love language, nothing will speak more deeply to him or her emotionally than simple acts of service.

Maxine, who had been married for 15 years, came to my office one day because she was frustrated with her marriage: "I don't understand David. Every day he tells me that he loves me, but he never does anything to help me. He just sits on the couch watching TV while I wash the dishes and the thought never crosses his mind to help me. I'm sick of hearing 'I love you.' If he loved me, he would do something to help me."

Maxine's primary love language is acts of service (not words of affirmation) and even though her husband David loved her, he had never learned to express his love in a way that made her feel loved. However, after David and I talked and he read *The Five Love Languages*, he got the picture and started speaking Maxine's love language. In less than a month, her love tank was beginning to fill up and their marriage moved from winter to spring.

The next time I talked to Maxine, she said, "It's wonderful. I wish we had come for counselling 10 years ago. I never knew about the love languages. I just knew I didn't feel loved."

Receiving gifts

In every society throughout human history, gift giving has been perceived as an expression of love. Giving gifts is universal because there is something inside the human psyche that says if you love someone, you will give to him or her.

What many people do not understand is that for some people, receiving gifts is their primary love language. It's the thing that makes them feel loved most deeply. If you're married to someone whose primary love language is gift giving, you will make your spouse feel loved and treasured by giving gifts on birthdays, holidays, anniversaries and "no occasion" days.

The gifts need not be expensive or elaborate; it's the thought that counts. Even something as simple as a homemade card or a few cheerful flowers will communicate your love to your spouse. Little things mean a lot to a person whose primary love language is receiving gifts.

Quality time

If your spouse's love language is quality time, giving him or her your undivided attention is one of the best ways you can show your love. Some men pride themselves on being able to watch television, read a magazine and listen to their wives, all at the same time. That is an admirable trait, but it is not speaking the love language of quality time.

Instead, you must turn off the TV, lay the magazine down, look into your mate's eyes and listen and interact. To your spouse, 20 minutes of your undivided attention – listening and conversing – is like a 20-minute refill of his or her love tank.

Men, if you really want to impress your wife, the next time she walks into the room while you are watching a sporting event, put the television on mute and don't take your eyes off her as long as she's in the room. If she engages you in conversation, turn the TV off and give her your undivided attention. You will score a thousand points and her love tank will be overflowing.

Physical touch

We have long known the emotional power of physical touch. That's why we pick up babies and touch them tenderly. Long before an infant understands the meaning of the word *love*, he or she feels loved by physical touch.

In marriage, the love language of physical touch includes everything from putting a hand on your mate's shoulder as you walk by, touching his or her leg as you're driving together, holding hands while you're walking, kissing, embracing and sexual intercourse.

If physical touch is your spouse's primary love language, nothing communicates love more clearly than for you to take the initiative to reach out and touch your mate.

Take the "Discover Your Love Languages" quiz at www.5lovelanguages.com

Gary Chapman is a relationship counsellor and author of the **The 5 Love Languages** series. He is the director of Marriage and Family Life Consultants, Inc. He also has a radio program on marriage and relationships that airs on over 100 stations and can be heard at www.moodyradio.org Search for "Building Relationships."

Heart, meet gut

by Dr. Mercola

It's becoming relatively common knowledge that your health is not just about your body, but rather the result of its symbiotic relationship with 100 trillion bacteria and other microorganisms. Your microbiome is unique to you, like a fingerprint, and represents a combination of lifestyle factors, genetics, environment and more.

Your gut microbiome influences your immune responses and nervous system functioning and plays a role in the development of a number of diseases, including obesity, cancer and heart disease. In the latter case, research has emerged that bacteria in your gut may play an integral role in the formation of fatty deposits on your arteries, leading to atherosclerosis (hardening of your arteries).

Perhaps even more remarkable, now researchers have also figured out a way to stop the process

.

Targeting gut microbes to prevent heart disease

Research by physician Stanley Hazen of the Cleveland Clinic and colleagues has shown that certain bacteria in your gut can transform choline (found in meat and eggs) and other dietary nutrients into trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO), which slows the breakdown of cholesterol.

The higher your TMAO levels become, the more fatty plaques may collect in your arteries, which may promote atherosclerosis and other heart problems.

> Your gut microbiome influences your immune responses and nervous system functioning and plays a role in the development of a number of diseases, including obesity, cancer and heart disease.

As *The Atlantic* recently reported, Dr. Hazen's colleague Zeneng Wang discovered that the chemical 3,3-dimethyl-1-butanol (DMB) prevents gut microbes from turning choline into trimethylamine (TMA), thereby lowering the risk of heart problems. DMB is a choline-like compound that works by "gumming up" the enzymes required by the bacteria to digest choline, which stops TMA production. According to *The Atlantic*, "It takes two to TMAO: Bacteria first transform choline into TMA, before an enzyme from the host animal changes TMA into TMAO.

At first, Hazen's team tried to prevent the second part of this chain by blocking the animal enzyme. They succeeded, lowering TMAO levels in mice and making them resistant to atherosclerosis. But there was just one problem: disabling the enzyme leads to a build-up of TMA, which doesn't harm the heart but does smell of rotting fish."

By targeting gut microbes with DMB, the mice, which were bred to be vulnerable to atherosclerosis, produced less TMAO even when fed a choline-rich diet. They also had fewer signs of the condition.

Your gut microbes might be one reason why eating red meat is linked to heart disease.

Your gut bacteria can also metabolize L-carnitine – a substance found in red meat, eggs and other foods – and in so doing produce TMAO. Interestingly, people with diets high in L-carnitine, i.e. meat eaters, had a gut microbe composition that was more prone to forming TMAO, while vegetarians and vegans did not.

Even after consuming large amounts of L-carnitine in a steak or supplement, the vegetarians and vegans in the study did not produce significant amounts of TMAO. Does this mean you should avoid meat and L-carnitine? I believe the answer is a resounding no. The science is very clear that L-carnitine is required to shuttle fatty acids into the mitochondria to burn them as fuel. It is an important mitochondrial nutrient and I personally take a supplement because I don't eat much red meat.

However, I believe healthy, non-CAFO [confined animal feeding operations] red meat can be an important part of a healthy diet. One just does not want to consume it in excess… Anything over three to four ounces and two ounces for people under140 pounds is far too much protein and will raise mTOR levels [mtor is a serine/threonine protein kinase].

If you are a vegetarian or someone that has a mitochondrial dysfunction disease then I strongly believe you should be on a supplement of L-carnitine, not acetylcarnitine – simple, plain L-carnitine. However, Dr. Hazen and colleagues believe that eating red meat alters your gut flora in a way that predisposes your body toward TMAO production and subsequently heart disease. I suspect this research is flawed as they never really carefully examined the quantity or quality of meat being consumed. CAFO meat should be avoided for reasons previously discussed and excessive meat consumption.

In my view, excessive meat, especially CAFO meat, will not only contribute to heart disease, but cancer, obesity, diabetes and neurodegenerative diseases.

Healthy habits Happy people

photo © Gajus

Being able to manifest positive emotions and happiness is perhaps one of the greatest gifts you have been given as a human being. But to some extent, being happy is a *choice* you need to make, much like choosing to exercise or eat right. Happiness comes from within – it's not meted out by circumstance alone. This is why, if you truly want to be happy, you need to work on yourself first. And the health benefits mentioned at left, like a significantly reduced risk of heart attack and other cardiac events, should provide ample motivation for doing so.

Interestingly, self-acceptance appears to be one of the most important factors that can produce a more consistent sense of happiness. In a survey of 5,000 people by the charity Action for Happiness, people were asked to rate themselves between 1 and 10 on 10 habits that are scientifically linked to happiness. While all 10 habits were strongly linked to overall life satisfaction, acceptance was the strongest predictor. In all, the survey resulted in the following *10 Keys to Happier Living*, which together spell out the acronym GREAT DREAM:

- **Giving**: do things for others
- **Relating**: connect with people
- **Exercising:** take care of your body
- **Appreciating**: notice the world around you
- **Trying out**: keep learning new things
- **Direction**: have goals to look forward to
- **Resilience**: find ways to bounce back
- **Emotion**: take a positive approach
- **Acceptance**: be comfortable with who you are
- **Meaning**: be part of something bigger

Another way to think about happiness is to define it as "whatever gets you excited." Once you've identified that activity, whatever it is, you can start focusing your mind around that so you can integrate more of it into your day-to-day life.

Optimism – a healthy boost to your heart

by Dr. Mercola

Mounting research reveals that you cannot separate your health from your emotions and numerous studies support the idea that having an upbeat and positive perspective can translate into living a longer healthier life. For example, in one older study, pessimism was linked to a 19 percent higher risk of dying over a 30-year period.

After examining the associations between optimism and heart health in more than 5,100 adults of various ethnic groups for 11 years, researchers at the University of Illinois report that people who display a more optimistic can-do attitude in life experience significantly better cardiovascular health over the long term.

People who were the most optimistic were up to 76 percent more likely to have a total health score in the ideal range. The health scores were based on seven metrics used by the American Heart Association (AHA) to define heart health.

This includes blood pressure, body mass index, fasting plasma glucose, serum cholesterol levels, diet, exercise and smoking. According to study author Rosalba Hernandez, "Individuals with the highest levels of optimism have twice the odds of being in ideal cardiovascular health compared to their more pessimistic counterparts. This association remains significant, even after adjusting for socio-demographic characteristics and poor mental health... At the population level, even this moderate difference in cardiovascular health translates into a significant reduction in death rates.

This evidence, which is hypothesized to occur through a bio-behavioral mechanism, suggests that prevention strategies that target modification of psychological well-being – e.g., optimism – may be a potential avenue for AHA [American Heart Association] to reach its goal of improving Americans' cardiovascular health by 20 percent before 2020."

Can you die from a broken heart?

If optimism and happiness can boost your heart health, what about the more extreme of negative emotions: grief? You sometimes hear stories of elderly partners dying within weeks, days or even hours of each other or people who suffer deadly cardiac events following some other severe emotional blow.

But can you really die from a "broken heart?" Researchers say yes. Losing a significant person in your life raises your risk of having a heart attack the next day by 21 times and in the following week by six times. The abrupt increase in risk of cardiovascular events like heart attack following a heartbreak is thought to be related to the flood of stress hormones your body is exposed to.

For instance, adrenaline increases your blood pressure and your heart rate and it's been suggested that it may lead to narrowing of the arteries that supply blood to your heart or even bind directly to heart cells allowing large amounts of calcium to enter and render the cells temporarily unable to function properly.

The risk of a heart attack begins to decline after about a month, likely because the levels of stress hormones start to level back out. The loss of a loved one also increases your risk of stress cardiomyopathy, which is sometimes referred to as "broken heart syndrome."

The symptoms of stress cardiomyopathy are very similar to those of a typical heart attack, including chest pain, shortness of breath, low blood pressure and even congestive heart failure. There are some key differences, however. In broken heart syndrome, the symptoms occur shortly after an extremely stressful event, such as a death in the family, serious financial loss, extreme anger, a serious medical diagnosis or a car accident or other trauma.

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Snack your way to health

Can snacking be a key ingredient in a healthy lifestyle? If your first response was "No!" here's a chance to update your perceptions. Some of us were raised with the advice to "never eat between meals," which makes sense in protecting our teeth from sweets. Yet there can be significant advantages to snacking on healthy foods. Researchers have found that eating frequent mini-meals offers health benefits. Dr. David Jenkins and colleagues at the University of Toronto have reported some remarkable advantages with grazing.

In one study, participants were randomly divided into two groups and both groups were given the same types and amounts of food over a two-week period. One group consumed three meals a day. For those on the "Nibbling Diet," food was divided into 17 mini-meals a day. After two weeks, the Nibblers had reduced their blood cholesterol levels by more than 15 percent. Cortisol, a stress indicator, was reduced by 17 percent. Nibbling proved to keep blood glucose more constant without the extreme valleys and peaks in blood glucose that occur before and after big meals. Average serum insulin levels of Nibblers were reduced by 28 percent. With less insulin, the body is less likely to convert the load of calories into body fat.

Granted, the typical North American way of snacking can't be considered healthy. Grazing on concentrated sources of fat or sugar (or both) will pack the weight onto your body. However, see below for some healthy snack choices:

Nibbling proved to keep blood glucose more constant without the extreme valleys and peaks in blood glucose.

Raw veggies are particularly rich in vitamins and protective phytochemicals. It's worth spending half an hour each week chopping an assortment of colourful, crunchy crudités: celery, carrots, peppers, cucumber, jicama, zucchini, snow pea pods or sugar snap peas, broccoli or cauliflower florets and cherry tomatoes. When you're ready for a snack, they'll be at the front of the fridge, making health an easy choice.

Hummus is the easiest way to get protein and enjoy the blood sugar-levelling effect of legumes.

Salsas are rich in lutein, a phytochemical found in tomato products. Researchers link lutein with protection against cancers, especially prostate cancer. Salsas are low in fat and high in vitamins.

Soynuts are a high protein snack food, which can also be added to a salad – like croutons.

Nuts are high in fat so keep portions moderate. However, the fat comes packaged with a wealth of minerals and protective substances. For growing youngsters, high-energy adults, athletes and those who have difficulty maintaining their weight, nuts are a *great* solution.

Dried fruits (raisins, currants, apricots) help you stock up on iron. If you tend to get cold in winter, keep raisins handy (in your briefcase, backpack, desk or car). When your blood sugar drops, you'll have an instant remedy. (Keep a toothbrush handy, too.) Fresh fruit is also great choice.

Cereals, such as granola, aren't only for breakfast. They can be high-energy, tasty snack foods. Look for organic, GMO-free products with little or no sugar.

Chips have a bad reputation, but if you look, you can find products that are organic, GMO free, moderate in fat content and free of hydrogenated oils. In addition to different colours of corn, chips are made from black beans, rice, taro and vegetables.

Chocolate: Since it is February, we must mention dark chocolate. After all, it comes from a bean.

Vesanto Melina is a Vancouver dietitian, author and consultant. www.nutrispeak.com, 604-882-6782.

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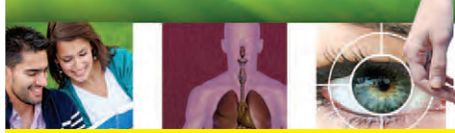

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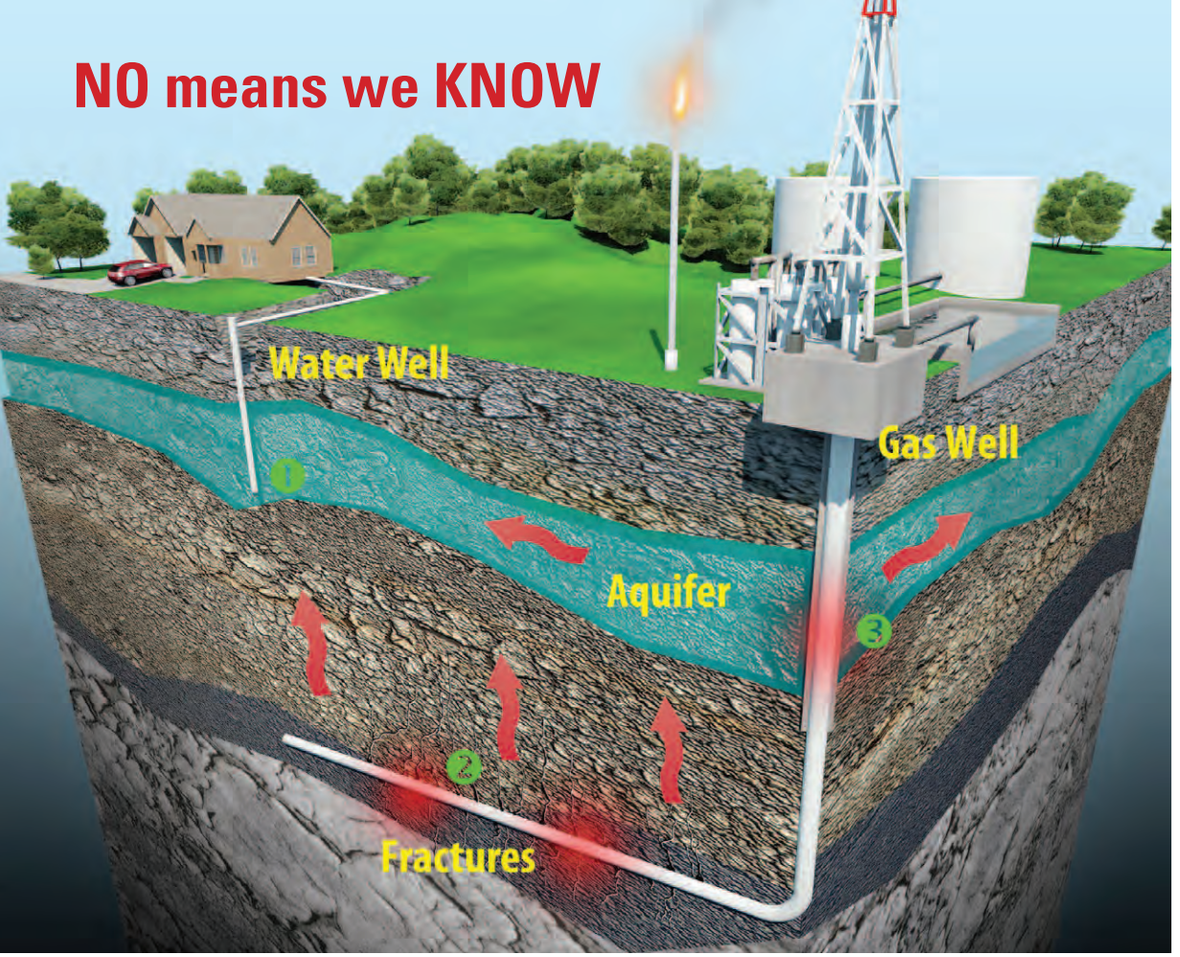

Toxins from natural gas can migrate into drinking water aquifers (1) from fracking (2) and through unintended cracks in the well casing (3).

No to fracking Yes to our future

by Bruce Mason

Are you part of Christy's so-called "Forces of NO?" If so, congratulations! You're also saying "YES" to facts, environmental stewardship and a burgeoning renewable economy. "Fear of change?" Nonsense. Another LNG lie.

In 2011, when rich elites handed over power to Christy Clark from Gordon Campbell, the much-discussed Cornell University study, "Methane and the Greenhouse-Gas Footprint of Natural Gas from Shale Formations," was released. It established LNG as a greater environmental threat than any other fossil fuel, including coal.

Hydraulic fracturing – fracking – consumes and contaminates vast quantities of water, causes earthquakes and, most importantly, emits methane at levels far beyond estimates. Recent high-profile, nightmarish examples and ongoing scientific research have confirmed the groundbreaking study's warnings.

Touted as a cleaner burning "bridge fuel" in the transition to a post carbon world, LNG has been discredited as fool's gold. The dark side of the hugely invasive, last-ditch process cancels out any short-term benefit. As the Sierra Club recently noted, "LNG is incompatible with any serious approach to reducing emissions."

Anthony Ingraffea, lead investigator of the Cornell study, is an unlikely fracking foe. He recalls, "I spent 25 years helping industry figure out how to best get oil and gas out of rock, but am aghast at high-volume, slick-water lateral fracking from multi-well, clustered pads. Something I worked on my whole life has turned into a Frankenstein. For those who say we can regulate our way around this, I'm sorry," says Ingraffea. "Time is over. My position is this. Where shale gas development has not yet occurred, ban it. Period."

Quebec, Newfoundland/Labrador, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have passed fracking moratoriums and France, Germany and Ireland are among countries to outlaw the practice, along with New York state, Vermont and other US cities and counties.

Contrary to Christy's characterization of those who oppose LNG development, the TPP and mining tax breaks as "forces of no" and "fearful of change," environmentalists are fearlessly embracing a cleaner future.

The "Best BC News Story of 2015" was the unanimous rejection of $1.15 billion by the Lax- Kw'alaams First Nation. Refusing a fracked gas pipeline and terminal – in their territory just south of Prince Rupert – they stated, "The vote sends an unequivocal message this is not a money issue. This is environmental and cultural."

That's just part of the "NO" Christy doesn't understand, or refuses to admit. It's about much more than money, but that's part of the problem. Her 2013 election-grabbing come-on promised the first LNG plant, operational by 2015, with 19 more ASAP, creating 100,000 jobs, generating $100 billion, enough revenue to retire BC's debt and eliminate provincial sales tax.

Now, in 2016, there are no plants, jobs or big bucks. Zilch. Little leadership, but much giddy cheerleading for her new idea. "How often does a province create a brand new industry?" she asked us, adding, "We're really good at fracking." She also made reference to it as "A chance to make a huge contribution to cleaning up the world's air by exporting LNG."

With homegrown versions of "Drill Baby Drill!" she courted a lineup of highly suspect Asian investors to hop into BC's newly made LNG bed. She's starting to sound like Sarah Palin and George Bush Jr.

Meanwhile, Asian economies became anaemic and oil and gas prices tanked in a glutted, global fossil fuel market, now stunted by the phenomenal growth of renewable energy. Of the world's 90 LNG plants planned five years ago, only five are now even considered to be required. Topping the "most unlikely to succeed" list are Christy's 20, which face intensifying environmental opposition, especially from First Nations.

The "Best BC News Story of 2015" was the unanimous rejection of $1.15 billion by the Lax- Kw'alaams First Nation. Refusing a fracked gas pipeline and terminal – in their territory just south of Prince Rupert – they stated, "The vote sends an unequivocal message this is not a money issue. This is environmental and cultural."

Clark based her unqualified LNG advocacy on then-rising Asian gas prices, which exceeded *$15/MMBtu. The cost of fracking in northeast BC is high. It is unprofitable when the price drops below $11; prices have now collapsed to $6. What happened? In a word, "science." In two, "the economy." In three, "teachable climate moments," including storms, floods, wildfire, droughts, ocean decline, mass displacement of millions of people and the targets set in Paris. Three strikes and LNG is out.

Images of faucet and well-water, lit on fire, are etched in our minds. One example: Albertan Jessica Ernst. Her eight-year battle – seeking $33 million for water contamination and violation of her Charter rights – is now in the Supreme Court of Canada. There's no longer any doubt

that fracking contaminates and wastes vast amounts of diminishing water, taking it out of the life-giving water cycle.

Induced earthquakes are no longer in any doubt. The BC Oil and Gas Commission confirmed that fracking caused a 4.6-magnitude earthquake in August near Fort St. John. We have the dubious distinction of the largest earthquake ever linked to the fracking. Surely, this is not what Christy envisions in her "world-class" rhetoric.

The record is unlikely to stand, as earthquakes become commonplace with daily, even hourly, events in Oklahoma, now considered the most likely site of the "next big one." It may be high risk to frack the US Arbuckle formation, but it's even more questionable to fool with the San Andreas Fault where generations have been warned of a long overdue, unimaginable shock.

But Ingraffea is most concerned about methane leaks – the prime component of natural gas. Especially since every single scientific measurement of methane emissions – and there are now many – has greatly exceeded estimates. The massive methane leak in California's Aliso Canyon has passed the duration of BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Each day raises more alarms. Emissions are routine at well sites, compressor stations, pressure valves along pipelines, at storage sites and during transport. Ingraffea advises opponents to now fight the entire width and breadth of the fracking industry and infrastructure, not just at drilling sites.

New estimates of the potency of methane gas range from 40 to 100 times that of carbon dioxide. It traps much more heat in the atmosphere. We know that Earth's 1.5 billion cows already account for 18 percent of emissions. Add the unleashing of frozen methane in the Arctic permafrost and sub-Arctic Ocean. Recently, 27,000 well-bore leaks have been documented in Alberta and 10 percent of BC's oil and gas wells leak methane.

It is likely a PR exercise, but on the Clark government's new, 60-day website (until noon on March 25) https://engage.gov.bc.ca/climateleadership/phase2/ you can record your comments on climate change policy. You can also email your comments to climateleadershipplan@gov.bc.ca

Search out more opportunities to add your voice to the growing chorus and "Force of NO," which is taking back the Province and our future. NO means KNOW.

*MMBtu (1 million British Thermal Units)

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Prescription drug abuse

Canada's crazy for opiates

Calvin, the central character of my column this month, is a nice, hard-working guy who could be anyone's relative. But he's not a real person; he's a composite I created out of several people whose stories I have followed over the years. In this scenario, he's a 32-year-old carpenter who had a minor accident a few years ago where he fell and hurt his back. He was prescribed tramadol and later oxycodone – a widely prescribed opioid narcotic – to help control the pain. Over the next few weeks, he got a bit of physiotherapy to strengthen his back and his pain slowly lessened, but not his use of the drug. After three weeks, he tried to stop taking the oxycodone, but he experienced such incredible aching, sweating and chills that he went right back on it. Calvin may not have needed the drug anymore, but he couldn't stop because of the withdrawal symptoms every time he tried to quit.

Here's where the story gets interesting. When his supply started running low, he went back to his doctor and after two refills, the doc told him he couldn't prescribe them anymore. Desperate, Calvin found that, on the street, a single pill of "Hillbilly Heroin" – the street name for OxyContin – costs $10. So that's where he got his supply from until one day, one of the dealers suggested he try heroin, advising him it was cheaper and easier to find. Within three months of his accident, Calvin was now an unemployed heroin addict, barely holding it together and wondering where he was going to get his next fix.

Today, when people use the term "abuse" in relation to prescription drugs, they are almost always referring to opioids – powerful, pain-relieving drugs like morphine, hydromorphone, oxycodone, tramadol, fentanyl and others. The abuser is often characterized as a crazed druggie whose unravelled life is due to his own character flaws. Yet when one considers that many people like Calvin became that way through serious flaws in the system, we have to ask, "Are we doing enough to avoid these preventable tragedies that destroy peoples' lives?"

From 2010 to 2014, opioid prescribing in Canada jumped 25 percent to more than 22 million scripts going out the door every year, according to the pharmaceutical data firm IMS. Data from the Pain and Policy Studies Group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison show that Canada has the second highest opioid consumption in the world after the US. We swallow almost 10 times as many opioids per capita as people in the UK, five times as many as France and four times as many as New Zealand. According to data from Ontario's coroner office, prescription opioid-related deaths in Ontario doubled between 1991 and 2004 and more than tripled between 2004 and 2012. In 2012, there were 536 opioid-related deaths in Ontario alone; extrapolated across the country, that would give us about 1,400 opioid-related deaths in Canada per year. The US, by contrast, has about 19,000 opioid related deaths per year. Other countries have people in pain who need pain relief; why are they not seeing the gross numbers of overdoses and deaths related to opioids as we are in North America?

Some people maintain the solution is to crack down on opioid prescribing because most of the "abusers" are getting the drug from a prescription pad. But it is highly problematic to make access to these drugs too strict; you would end up denying too many legitimate patients who need help for their severe pain. At the same time, making the drugs too easy to get means people can more easily become addicts, with more of the drug ending up on the street, adding to society's overall toll of addiction, overdoses and deaths.

Clearly, one of the best ways to reduce the deaths from opioid abuse and overdose is to encourage doctors to consider other, possibly safer medications to start with. Most would agree that better education – both for physicians and patients – on the full range of possible pain treatments may steer more people towards drugs that are less addictive and less dangerous. Alternative ways to treat pain, such as physiotherapy, chiropractics and even cognitive behavioural therapy, can be very helpful for many people, but they are more difficult to access and not as widely covered. Pain clinics that specialize in treating patients with a range of measures are helpful, but waiting for a pain clinic might take months or years.

Canada has the second highest opioid consumption in the world after the US. We swallow almost 10 times as many opioids per capita as people in the UK, five times as many as France and four times as many as New Zealand.

Things have radically changed in the last two decades around the use of these drugs. It used to be that opioids were only prescribed for people with the severe, acute pain that comes with surgery or cancer. There are very effective treatments for non-cancer pain that aren't addictive like the opiates, but when OxyContin began to be widely promoted in the mid 1990s, physicians were told the drugs were less addictive and safer than they actually were.

Prior to about 1996, the year OxyContin was approved in Canada, overall opioid prescribing was a fraction of what it is today. Purdue Pharma, the drug company marketing OxyContin, crafted a narrative stating its new drug was a safe, long-acting drug designed to treat chronic pain. To enhance that message, the manufacturer funded promotional materials for medical students, including textbooks on prescribing for pain. By downplaying the addiction potential of opiates like OxyContin, not only were patients getting addicted, but doctors were exposed to biased and dangerous information. Patients suffered and died because of that faulty advice.

So back to Calvin. We might ask if he could have been better served with a non-opiate drug for his pain. Did anyone ever tell him he might become dependent on the drug? If someone recognized that things were going off the rails for him, wasn't there a safer option than turning to heroin?

Two Toronto-based drug policy experts, Dr. Joel Lexchin and Jillian Clare Kohler, have studied the promotion of OxyContin in Canada and the US, which they think is behind the widespread use and abuse of that product. Writing in the *International Journal of Risk & Safety in Medicine*, they say that any drug with a "high potential for abuse" should be strictly overseen by regulatory authorities for the first two years it's on the market. They also say "prescription event monitoring programs" should be set up for these drugs so that any adverse events experienced by the patients for at least six months after the drug is marketed can be collected and reported.

Dr. David Juurlink, a Toronto physician who is a stern advocate for rationality in the opioid wars, has followed the opiate issue intensely. He thinks things might be levelling off and slightly improving, but there is still a long way to go. He told me in an email that even when doctors agree about the dangers of opioids, many of them "have unreasonable views on the safety and effectiveness of these drugs and often look for excuses to blame what are clear drug-related problems on other things."

At the end of the day, people like Calvin, when trying to stop or reduce their dose of an opioid, will develop early features of opioid withdrawal and that means they will continue to take the drug just to function.

I have a lot of sympathy for doctors on this issue and perhaps even more for patients like Calvin, whose life has fallen into a pain dumpster and he can't get out. Since our doctors clearly want to help, but don't have time to become detox experts, my non-expert opinion is that the Calvins of the world need better options and a better system to care for them. As an individual patient, what should you do? There are no easy answers except to say if you are in severe pain, you will want to go slow and go low on these drugs. You'll need to work with your doctor to help minimize the harm and maximize the benefit for every single prescription you get.

This is not easy. We have a national tragedy on our hands, but we also have the means to fix it.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher in Victoria. His most recent book, **The Cochrane Collaboration: Medicine's Best Kept Secret**, has just been published.

by Rick Blickstead

A tax to tackle diabetes epidemic

Would you support a tax that reduced your risk of early death, blindness, amputation, stroke, heart attack and kidney failure?

We know that excessive consumption of calories contributes to obesity, which is a major risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Sugar-sweetened beverages, such as non-diet pop, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit-flavoured drinks, sweetened iced teas and blended coffee drinks, can be a significant source of such excess calories.

The average Canadian drinks about 100 litres of sugary beverages each year… Regular consumption of these beverages (one or more servings per day) increases the risk for diabetes, regardless of weight.

The new twist is that recent studies show that regular consumption of these beverages (one or more servings per day) increases the risk for diabetes, regardless of weight. So even at a healthy weight, if you obtain a substantial portion of your calories from sugar-sweetened beverages, you have a 20 percent higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes compared to others of the same weight whose calories come from other sources.

Why is this a problem? Today, the average Canadian drinks about 100 litres of sugary beverages each year. That's almost a serving a day and that serving usually contains at least 10 teaspoons of sugar.

A growing collection of studies shows that a tax on these beverages decreases consumption. Mexico, France, Hungary and Finland have successfully implemented such taxes. In Mexico, a 10 percent tax on drinks containing added sugar was introduced in 2014. In the first year, there was a six percent decline in consumption. But the decrease actually accelerated over the course of the year. By December 2014, the year-over-year reduction for that month reached 12 percent, with the greatest decline seen in poorer communities. This matters to us in Canada because those with lower incomes have the highest rates of diabetes.

These facts have led the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) to call on governments to introduce a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. Type 2 diabetes is a national health crisis; a new case is diagnosed every three minutes. Today, 3.4 million Canadians are diagnosed with diabetes, a figure that has doubled in the last 12 years. The personal health burden is tragic; diabetes can lead to a reduction of five to 15 years in life span and contributes to 30 percent of strokes, 40 percent of heart attacks and 50 percent of kidney failure requiring dialysis.

Sugary beverages are not the only cause of the diabetes epidemic. Our population is aging, overweight and sedentary, just some of the factors that raise the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Many people carry genetic risks that cause diabetes, regardless of their lifestyle. Nevertheless, it is urgent to do whatever we can, starting now. While a single tax on a single item is not the magical solution to the diabetes situation in Canada, it will help make the healthy choice the easy, cheaper choice. Any tax should be one part of a larger effort that includes public education, transparent nutrition labelling and stricter regulations on advertising to children.

The recent experience of different countries shows that supporting healthy choices through directed taxes does decrease consumption of unhealthy products and improve our health. An example close to home is Canada's experience around tobacco use. Lung cancer rates have been declining since the 1980s. Changes that started 20 years earlier – changing package labels, increasing education in schools, higher taxes, restrictions on advertising and other approaches – all contributed to dramatically decreasing the number of smokers in Canada and the sickness tobacco causes. But it took time to gain momentum. That's why it's important to start making changes now if we want to bend the diabetes impact curve.

The CDA hopes that our governments show their commitment to the health of Canadians not only by funding treatments for illnesses, but also by using the tax system to promote health.

Rick Blickstead is the president and CEO of the Canadian Diabetes Association, www.diabetes.ca

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by Dr. Magda Havas

Electrohypersensitivity disorder

The new name for an old problem

At the turn of the 20th century a mysterious illness emerged. The first people to be affected by it were the telegraph line installers and the telephone switchboard operators. The symptoms of the illness included nerve disorders – hence the name neurasthenia or nervous asthenia – depression, extreme anxiety, exhaustion, convulsions, unconsciousness, rashes and a whole host of other malaises.

The afflictions became so bad that, in 1907, the Bell telephone switchboard operators in Toronto went on strike. They demanded much shorter working hours and better working conditions. In the 1950s, with the invention of microwave frequencies, radar operators started suffering with similar symptoms that they called radio wave or microwave illness.

Now, at the turn of the 21st century with the introduction of personal wireless technologies, the general population seems to be plagued with the same symptoms, which we call electrohypersensitivity disorder or EHS.

What do these three events have in common? The introduction of chronic overexposure to electromagnetic fields.

In the telephone switchboard operator case, the personnel would manually place jacks into a switchboard panel to connect one telephone caller to another individual by the use of a switchboard cable. Their proximity to the switchboard caused them to be chronically exposed to hundreds of live telephone connections for up eight hours each. They sat with electromagnetic fields on their head from the speakers in their headset and their bodies came into contact with voltage by the individual connections.

We now wear microwave transmitters in the form of smart phones, wireless tablets that constantly emit Wi-Fi, bluetooth and cellular data.

In the case of the radar operators, they worked near large radar antennae that were broadcasting and receiving wireless electromagnetic fields.

In the third case, we now wear microwave transmitters in the form of smart phones, wireless tablets that constantly emit Wi-Fi, bluetooth and cellular data.

Basically, neurasthenia, radio wave illness and electrohypersenitvity are one and the same. However, neurasthenia is classified as an illness in the WHO list of diseases and EHS is relegated to idiopathic environmental illness, which basically means we don't know the cause. In reality, the medical community knew it was a problem but in order to allow technology to progress the use of the word neurasthenia fell out of favour and is rarely used today as a diagnosis.

With the help of Microsoft and the University of California, the Royal Commission document headed by the former Prime Minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King, of the plight of the Bell Switchboard Operators was documented and digitized. It is a fascinating read and the transcription of the hearing deserves to be turned into a feature film or at least an audio book.

The entire Royal Commission Report is available at www.magdahavas.com Search for the article, "The disease of 'modern' civilization…neurasthenia." There is a link to the report at the end of the article.

Magda Havas is associate professor of Environmental and Resource Studies at Trent University where she teaches and does research on the biological effects of environmental contaminants. Dr. Havas received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. www.magdahavas.com

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Choose to feel happy

A miracle is a shift in perception … it can happen in an instant.
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Sometimes life events affect us in a negative way. I often hear my clients say, "It's just not fair!" The way they are treated at work is not fair. The way mom treats her adult children is not fair. It's not fair that others have more money or an easier time in life. It's not fair they have an illness. It's even not fair that someone else won the lottery!

The inner child somehow feels everything should be fair and the ego carries this belief into adulthood. As mature adults, we know well that life is not fair. There are many who seem to be much better off than we are; then again, so many seem to be much worse off.

Perhaps because parents do such a good job of keeping things fair with us as children, we expect the world will treat us the same way. However, there is no dispenser of life experiences with the job of ensuring everyone is treated equally. Not even God, although even God gets blamed for life's unfairness.

If we focus on things being unfair, we put ourselves in the position of victim and either feel sorry for ourselves or lash out at the world. That generally attracts more negative experiences, thus reaffirming our belief that life is not fair to us.

We look to the world to fill our cup when we are not filling it ourselves.

If we look at our lives this way, we can never be happy because there will always be someone who seems to have it better. If we shift our perspective, however, we can create our own happiness that does not depend on what happens outside of us. It sounds simple, but if we focus on what we do have and what is right in our lives rather than what is missing or wrong, we can feel blessed all the time. We may not be able to change the external reality, but we can choose how we look at it.

We can also think about empowering ourselves. The child feels powerless to change how he feels. The child looks to others for fulfilment of his needs. The wise adult can begin to take care of their inner child's emotional needs. We seek validation from others when we are not validating ourselves. We seek approval from others when we are not fully accepting ourselves. We look to the world to fill our cup when we are not filling it ourselves.

In my experience with clients, it seems one of the hardest things is to establish a truly loving and nurturing relationship with ourselves. This love needs to be unconditional. It is not based on how much we have, what we have achieved, how we look, how we perform or what others think of us.

It is akin to getting off the emotional grid where we depend on things outside of ourselves to make us feel good and becoming instead the generator of our own self-love, self-worth, self-confidence and, ultimately, our own happiness.

The new living translation of *Corinthians 13* says, "Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance."

It would seem this was written to show us how we should love others. However, there is great wisdom in applying these principles to the way we love ourselves. There is no place in this conception of a loving soul for any thoughts about things not being fair. We transcend that way of thinking and evolve into a new way of being.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, "Deep Powerful Change" hypnosis CDs and "Creating Effective Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca

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StarWise

February 2016

IT'S NOT ABOUT what the stars are doing to you, but what you are doing to the stars. Think about it. The planetary positions at your birth hail and herald exactly who you are, along with which forms of karma you bring with you into this life, in accordance with the positive and negative qualities you created in previous incarnations. Following this line of thinking, we are creating our future horoscope by our thoughts and actions in this lifetime. Our bad actions create chains of iron, while our good thoughts and deeds create chains of gold. Point being that whatever we do here in our Earthly sojourn creates chains and, as we know, chains are meant to bind and hold us in slavery to our minds and senses.

According to the Sat Guru, we left our true home – high above the starry firmament in Sach Khand – approximately four billion years ago. Imagine that! We have been away from our true abode and have taken form as rock, tree, insect, bird, animal and human as we work our way through the cosmic phenomena called Awagawan, the coming and going of the soul in its myriad forms, in accordance to karmic law. We constantly and continuously spin the web of destiny by our actions as we reap what we have sown in the past and prepare our future with what we are sowing now. Although seemingly nearly overwhelmingly frightful, it is a plan the creator put together to teach the souls about love – and only love. The saints teach us that God is love and love is God and that the way back to God is through love. It's all too true.

Wearing the astrologer's hat for over four decades has taught me that no one is happy. When the soul becomes tired and weary and has had enough and cries out to the Lord for help is when things truly begin to change. That is when the Lord sends his emissaries to scoop up the souls that have cried out for relief and want to journey back home to the true abode of permanent love, light and bliss. We came from the regions of bliss and we must return there one day or another. That bliss and consciousness is in all life forms – in the birds and animals to lesser degrees; nonetheless, they seek the same love and bliss. It's the reason we should love all creatures and treat them all with the greatest respect for they are our brothers and sisters in light and life. Only love will do.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.

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ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Let the wild flower grow in the dark and when it's ready it can show its beauty to the world. You're the wild flower now and it's time for you to create as never before. Be who you are and stay original and the answers will come of their own accord. Career potential is great.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
Travel and career interests dominate the scene. Intense times are indicated. Don't lead with your horns and allow others to have their say. Deep spiritual questions come up and it's high time to contemplate and consider what is real and of true value. Dollars and trinkets won't do. Dig deep and get to the truth.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
Gemini is known as the sign of youth and many Geminis retain their youthful appearance into their later years. Regardless of your chronological age, you may feel old and a tad weary these days. Not to worry, as this too shall pass. It's time to seek and discover. Journeys are probable and spiritual enlightenment possible.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
Crabs love to dig and now the time has come for you to dig deep in your quest for discovery, truth and true understanding of the nature of things. People come and people go and you may say goodbye to someone now. Lasting legacies are made and cherished for many years to come.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
As the Sun moves through Aquarius, it heralds your solar low of the year. It may be wise to lay low and make yourself a small target. Bluff and bluster won't really wash right now and you would get called on your game. Compassion, patience and honesty comprise the recipe for smooth sailing. Re-invent yourself now.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
Luck and fate factors are huge for Virgo right now. I wouldn't be surprised if a Virgo wins the power ball lottery or some other huge windfall. Of course, the greatest windfall of all is spiritual enlightenment. It's the only treasure you can take with you when you transcend your body. Make the right call.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Home, family, land and real estate are the big features right now, as are love and creativity. It's also a time of research and discovery along with discipline and hard work. You may not mind and you may thrive on it all. Someone completely different shakes you up and changes your world.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
Lord Mars visits throughout the month providing courage and energy. No one will ever doubt your relentless effort and determination and now's the time to truly put it in gear and move towards your goals. Keep in mind a soft reply turns away wrath. Make this your mantra, as things may get testy and tense.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
A corralled horse champs at the bit longing for the freedom of the open plains. You may feel like that horse these days. Anxiety and little energy are the general complaints when Saturn is around. Saturn's presence, although not comforting, brings very important lessons and etches wisdom and patience into our soul. Suck it up.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
Pluto's presence brings on a time of great transition and regeneration. To some, he bestows wealth and power; others he takes to a higher plane. It is a time of birthing and dying. Not so much physical dying, but the dying off of what is old and no longer useful.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
Saturn and Uranus, co-rulers of Aquarius, are casting good energy your way, providing wisdom and creativity. Now all you have to do is use it. Fixed signs like Aquarius find it difficult to make changes when necessary. Point, counter point scenarios are bound to happen now. Keep your sword sharp and leave it in its scabbard.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
Dreamy dreamers, drug dealers, con artists, spiritual warriors, renunciates, artists, illusionists, magicians, musicians, spin-meisters and actors can reap the best benefits of Neptune's passage through Pisces until the beginning of 2026. You can either swim in the illusions and attractions that this world offers or opt to go much higher into the realms of true spirituality.

Environmental rights are human rights

My grandparents came here from Japan at the beginning of the 20th century. Although it would be a one-way trip, the perilous journey across the Pacific was worth the risk. They left behind extreme poverty for a wealth of opportunity.

But Canada was different then, a racist country built on policies of colonization, assimilation and extermination of the land's original peoples. My grandparents and Canadian-born parents – like indigenous people and others of "colour" – couldn't vote, buy property in many places or enter most professions. During the Second World War, my parents, sisters and I were deprived of rights and property and incarcerated in the BC Interior even though Canada was the only home we'd ever known.

A lot has changed since my grandparents arrived and since I was born in 1936. Women were not considered "persons" with democratic rights until 1918. People of African or Asian descent, including those born and raised here, couldn't vote until 1948 and indigenous people didn't get to vote until 1960. Homosexuality was illegal until 1969!

In 1960, John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government enacted Canada's Bill of Rights and in 1982 Pierre Trudeau's Liberals brought us the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with equality rights strengthened in 1985.

We should celebrate those hard-won rights. I'm happy to have witnessed much of the progress my country has made. But there's room for improvement. And in some ways Canada has gone backward.

When I was a boy, we drank water from lakes and streams without a thought. I never imagined that one day we would buy water in bottles for more than we pay for gasoline. Canada has more fresh water per capita than any nation, but many indigenous communities don't have access to clean drinking water.

When I was growing up in Vancouver, Dad would take me fishing for halibut off Spanish Banks, sturgeon on the Fraser River and salmon in English Bay. Today, I can't take my grandchildren fishing in those places because the fish are gone.

As a boy, I never heard of asthma. Today, childhood asthma is as common as red hair. And half of all Canadians live in places with unacceptable air pollution.

> The right to live in a healthy environment is recognized by more than 110 nations – but not Canada.

I also remember when all food was organic. I never thought we'd have to pay more not to have chemicals in our food. Today, we can't avoid the toxic consequences of our industrial and agricultural activities. We all have dozens of toxic pollutants incorporated into our bodies.

We may think the highest rate of deforestation is in the Amazon, but in 2014 Canada became the world leader in loss of pristine forests.

Surely, in a nation with so much natural wealth, we should expect better appreciation, treatment and protection of the air, water, soil and rich biological diversity that our health, prosperity and happiness depend on.

The right to live in a healthy environment is recognized by more than 110 nations – but not Canada. That inspired the David Suzuki Foundation and Ecojustice to launch the Blue Dot movement a little over a year ago.

It's exceeded our expectations, with more than 100 municipalities passing environmental rights declarations and a number of provinces considering or committing to the idea. The next step is to take it to the federal level, by calling for an environmental bill of rights and, ultimately, an amendment to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The environmental rights campaign is also about human rights and social justice – something recognized by the United Nations, which has appointed a special rapporteur on human rights and the environment. A country and its values are measured not by the number of extremely wealthy people, but by the state of its poorest and most vulnerable. Many environmental problems are tied to societal inequities – hunger and poverty, chronic unemployment, absence of social services, inadequate public transit and often conflicting priorities of corporations and the public interest – as people at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards and toxic pollution.

Canada has come a long way, but we can't be complacent. We must work to maintain and strengthen the rights of a sl Canadians, to build an even better Canada. That means giving all Canadians the right to a healthy environment.

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation senior editor Ian Hanington. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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She graduate from Anhui College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in 1985. She has been working in the field of TCM since then. Please call to book your appointment.

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INDEPENDENT MEDIA Meghan Sali

MEDIA

Netflix to block customer privacy tools

When David Fullagar, Netflix vice president of Content Delivery Architecture, announced last week the company would be cracking down on users who employ privacy tools while watching Netflix, you could practically hear the groans reverberate across the globe.

The bombshell was dropped only a week after Netflix launched service in 130 additional countries, bringing the total to a whopping 190 countries and transforming the web giant into the United Nations of online streaming.

It may not be immediately obvious to many, but Netflix's commitment to freeze out customers who choose to use VPNs (virtual private networks) – an increasingly popular, secure way to connect to the Internet and help protect your activities from prying eyes – is really the effect of lobbying on behalf of media giants who license content.

The technology behind VPNs is one that alters the IP address of the user, such that it becomes impossible to tell where the traffic is really coming from. In so doing, however, it also allows Netflix customers to bypass geo-restricted content and, in some cases, even to choose the country they'd like to route their traffic through, giving them access to content "outside their region." This enrages licence-holders, as locking users into a limited catalogue enables them to continue to negotiate lucrative country-by-country licences and maximize profits.

What is ignored in this debate, however, is that VPN use is perfectly legal and by far the most user-friendly way for Internet users to encrypt their browsing traffic and ensure they have a private, secure connection. What does it say about a Web company when it blocks the use of privacy software that has become increasingly necessary in today's era of mass surveillance and big data mining?

> What does it say about a Web company when it blocks the use of privacy software that has become increasingly necessary in today's era of mass surveillance and big data mining?

Additionally, the use of VPNs protects users from some of the more predatory market practices we know are taking place with increasing frequency. Take for example the case from 2014 when Verizon was caught throttling Netflix or more recently when T-Mobile was caught throttling all video traffic.

In these cases, using privacy tools to encrypt traffic prevents ISPs from seeing what a user is doing, thus making it impossible for ISPs to selectively slow down your viewing experience. This is a particularly salient point for people living in countries without mandated Net Neutrality rules, but also for us here in Canada who have legal protections, but routinely see them violated.

When all is told, Netflix's paying customers should be able to both watch Netflix and protect their privacy. And because there is no way for Netflix to determine whether VPN users are simply employing the service to get around geo-restrictions, they should err on the side of their customers and refuse to block people who use VPNs.

Hopefully, in time and with the support of their users, Netflix will be able to push back against media giants who are taking a 20th century approach to a 21st century technology. After all, global licencing would solve this problem to everyone's satisfaction and we know that Netflix itself hopes one day to be able to offer the same content to all customers.

Netflix users can speak out and call on the company not to block us from using privacy tools at https://act.openmedia.org/netflix

Meghan Sali is Digital Rights Specialist for OpenMedia, a community-based group that safeguards the possibilities of the open Internet. openmedia.org

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Clinic:
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Events

For rates & placements email
datebook@commonground.ca

FEB 7
All-Day Master Singing Workshop. Hosted by Lynn McGown, singer, teacher, vocal coach. 11AM-5PM, $130. For more info and to reserve your space, call 604-222-4113. Visit www.lynnmcgown.com

FEB 10
"Transform Your Life" – Public Talk with international teacher and Buddhist monk, Gen-la Kelsang Khyenrab : SFU Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, 149 W. Hastings, Downtown. Doors open 7PM, Talk: 7:30-9PM. $15(pre-register)-$20(door), Info: www.kmcvancouver.org/transform

FEB 11, 18, & 25
Free Info Sessions at the International College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2-4PM, 201-1508 W. Broadway, 604-731-2926. www.tcmcollege.com

FEB 12-14
The Wellness Show: Helping You Find Balance – Exhibits, seminars, cooking, demos, prizes & more. Vancouver Convention Centre, East Building, Exhibit hall B&C. Event info: www.thewellnessshow.com or 604-983-2794.

FEB 13 & 28
Krishnamurti Vancouver Group @ Vancouver Public Library, Board Breakout Room, 350 W. Georgia St. 1-5PM. Free video showing & dialogue! www.meetup.com/Krishnamurti-Vancouver-Group

FEB 19-21
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM $10; Course $395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

FEB 20 & 21
T & T Spiritual and Wellness Connections Presents a two-day Psychic & Wellness Event. Best Western, 319 North Road, Coquitlam. For more info: www.fair.tandtvancouver.com

FEB 20-21
Calgary Health Show: Stampede Park, BMO Centre, Hall D, 1410 Olympic Way SE, Sat 10AM-6PM, Sun 11AM-5PM. Adult $12/Wknd $18, Senior/Student $10/Wknd $15.

FEB 21
Interactive Talk: "Messages from your Essence" (individual attention). Shaman and author Premasudha Janet Hobbs, $65, Sunday 1-5PM, N. Vancouver, corinamenz@gmail.com, www.thecompassionateshaman

FEB 21
Meditation for Spiritual Awareness: FREE Intro Workshop by Science of Spirituality on the Theory & Practice of Jyoti Meditation – Meditation on the Inner Light. 2 PM, Meditation & Ecology Centre, 11011 Shell Rd., Richmond. Info/Registration: Linda, 604-985-5840. Drop-ins welcome.

FEB 21 & FEB 28
Talk & Workshop with Awakened Spiritual Teacher Raphael De Mohan. FEB 21: Talk: "The Processes of Awakening," 1-3PM, Surrey. FEB 28: 1-day workshop "The Power of the Voice," 10AM-5PM, Surrey. Info/Registration: 778-545-0800, www.vibrationsoundcolor.com

FEB 24
"The Coming Transformation - Aquarius, Building a New Civilization." Free multi-media presentation, VPL Central Branch, Peter Kaye room, Wed. 7PM, http://share-international.ca/events.html

FILM SCREENING

Nuclear Japan

Has nuclear power brought us happiness?

Lawyer / filmmaker Hiroyuki Kawai states, "To share the idea of nuclear zero nationwide, we need a movie."

March 9 **Dept. of Asian Studies**
1871 West Mall, UBC

12-2pm (CK Choi Conference Rm 102) Presentation & Q&A: 1) "Manga as Protest: Fukushima and the Oishinbo Nosebleed Issue." with Professor Nori Fujimoto 2) "Onagawa Youth Recover Their Local Community."
4-6pm (Asian Centre): Screening of *Nuclear Japan* plus Q&A with Professor Nori Fujimoto, Fukushima University and President Fumi Mano, Fukushima C.C.
6-7pm Reception (Asian Centre).

FREE event. RSVP required
To RSVP or host a screening, contact
gonbei4512@gmail.com
778 918-5690
www.nihontogenpatsu.com/english

FEB 25
Enjoy Food Without Regrets Seminar: Avoid 3 Mistakes Women Make That Keep Them Struggling With Stubborn Pounds, Low Energy & Feeling Unattractive. St. Paul Anglican Church, 1130 Jervis Street, Vancouver, 6:30-9PM, 604-355-5433, $15, Free at: http://integratednutrition.ca/vanseminar

FEB 26-28
"Deepening the New Consciousness" a retreat with Eckhart Tolle, on DVD (www.eckharttolle.com). At Krishnamurti Educational Centre of Canada. Beautiful ocean-front setting near Victoria. Register at www.krishnamurti-canada.ca, programs@krishnamurti-canada.ca, 250-744-3354.

MAR 2
"Make up Your Mind" with Duane O'Kane, 7:30PM sharp, Unity of Vancouver, 5840 Oak @41st. www.clearmind.com Bring display ad this page for free entry.

MAR 3 (and 2-6)
Free Intro Session Mar 3: Experience Ancestral Clearing with John Newton. Banyen Books, 3608 W. 4th Ave. See website for Group Events on Mar 2 & 4 and Ancestral Clearing Practitioner Training: www.johnnewton.com
For more info, call 604-445-6561 or email johnnewtonincanada@gmail.com
RSVP all events by email.

MAR 11-13
Indian Head Massage Weekend Workshop with Susan Allen. Course fee: $395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

MARCH 13-17
Sacred Passage End-of-life Doula Certificate Training with Tarron Estes, Conscious Dying Institute. Springbrooke Retreat Centre, Langley. $1665. Info: http://sacredpassagevcr.brownpapertickets.com

APR 23-24
Become a Certified Life Coach or Executive Coach: This 2-day intensive will teach you everything you need to know to succeed. Only Certified Coaches Federation graduates earn the esteemed Certified Life Coach Practitioner designations. In Vancouver. 866-455-2155 or 403-389-1190. www.certifiedcoachesfederation.com

MAY 14-15
Lumalight Colour & Geometry Course: Professional chromotherapy for holistic spiritual practices. Learn how to use Lumalight by Spectrahue™ tools. Nationally Accredited (CE's). Info/registration: 416-340-0882 www.spectrahue.com

THURSDAYS
Free class, Parkinson's Support Group: 2nd & 4th Thursday each month, 1-2 PM: St. Mary's Anglican Church, 2490 W. 37th Ave. More info: Christina, www.mindfulmovementtherapy.ca, 604-649-8522.

ONGOING

Break down social bias, timidity, loneliness, alienation at our nude-friendly events. Bring all friends, family. In BC: 5 indoor pool parties/month, many other events. Also, free Shy Therapy. www.korky.ca ('Nude events').

February special: Two weight management/overeating sessions for the price of one. Treatment that's affordable, fast and effective. Clinical hypnosis. Extended health coverage. With Louise Evans, Sparkhypnotherapy.com 604-773-5595 or 604-522-0257.

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Calgary Health Show Feb 20-21
www.thehealthshows.com
Women's Expos
Victoria Spring Expo March 5-6
www.victoriawomensshow.com
Pet Expo
Victoria, April 16-17
www.vancouverislandpetexpo.com
Baby & Family Fair, Vancouver
http://baby-fair.com

Classified

For rates & placements email classifieds@commonground.ca

KITSILANO COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE

SLIDING SCALE $20-$40. You pay what you can afford. 2948 W. Broadway, Vancouver. www.kitscommunityacupuncture.ca 604-428-1260

RETREATS

SWANWICK CENTRE, Victoria – An oasis for contemplation, healing and awakening: personal retreats and group rentals. www.swanwickcentre.ca / 250-744-3354.

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BEAUTIFUL SEMINAR/MEETING ROOM in natural healing centre near Broadway/Cambie intersection for rent evenings, weekends and weekdays. Very reasonable rent. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604-875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com.

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SHAMANIC HEALING AND COACHING: Relationships, work, emotional balance, finding meaning and purpose, rediscovering joy. One-on-one/groups – Drum journeys, Book of Life readings, chakra balancing, karma releasing. See testimonials on website. sonyaweir@uniserve.com 778-227-2939. www.eaglefireshamaniccoaching.com

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Barbara Hand Clow
Revelations of the Ruby Crystal
Fri, February 19, 7:00pm, $10
Cdn. Memorial Centre for Peace

Mary Tasi & Wade Baker
Hidden Journals: Captain Vancouver
Thurs, February 25, 6:30-8pm
Free Talk & Signing at Banyen

Ekabhumi Ellik
Sacred Tantric Art & Symbols
Wed, March 9, 6:30-8pm
Free Talk & Signing at Banyen

banyen.com 604-737-8858

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

in the Organic Health & Whole Food Market

The Community Farm Store
Is a 10,000 square foot market-style health and whole food store in Duncan that is seeking top-notch dynamic employees in all departments including wellness (RNHP/RNHC), produce, sales and grocery purchasing. We are looking for energetic employees with extensive product knowledge, established supplier relationships and phenomenal customer service skills. CFS staff help customers select the very best food and dietary products for optimal wellbeing. We only sell organic and we do not sell GMO's. If you have the background, the experience and the passion to be part of our farm store family, please send your resume and cover letter attention nicolette:
nicolette@communityfarmstore.ca
www.communityfarmstore.ca

Hermitage Retreat Centre

We offer meditation and yoga retreats from mid-March through September. We are located on a 60-acre organic farm near the ocean on Denman Island.
thehermitage.ca | 250-203-7091

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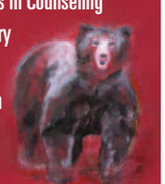
Patricia Vickers has a Masters in Counseling Psychology, an Interdisciplinary Doctorate and is a graduate of the Pacific Jubilee Program for Spiritual Direction.



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604-985-5840
www.sos.org

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Connexions Calendar – An event calendar for activists and rebels. Add your events!

Other Voices – The Connexions newsletter: a digest of alternative news and analysis.

Resources for organizing and publicity including a news release distribution service.

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